

03 THE IMPACT OF HIV/AIDS ON THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

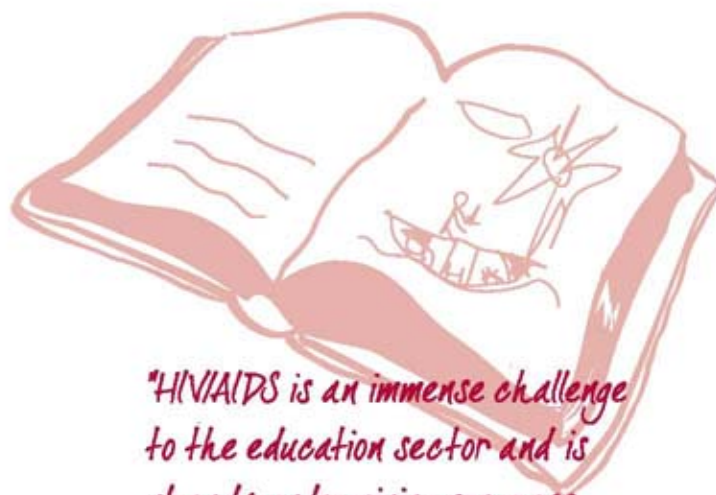
Countries that fail to bring the epidemic under control while prevalence rates are still relatively low run a risk of facing a large challenge in the future. Once the epidemic has become widespread, it has a tendency to spread much faster because more individuals and many different groups of society are affected.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic does not only affect individuals - it affects every part of, and every institution in, society. Achievements in human development are being undermined as countries lose young, productive people to the epidemic, economies stumble, households fall into deeper poverty, and the costs of the epidemic mount. This easily develops into a spiral as worsening socio-economic conditions render people and communities more vulnerable to the epidemic. More infections lead to more poverty, which in turn leads to more infections, and so on.

The impact on the education system

HIV/AIDS poses a severe threat to the education system. The impact of the epidemic on the African education systems clearly shows that Asian countries need to learn from its lessons and be proactive. If nothing is done about the epidemic, the impact of HIV/AIDS may become as severe as it has proven to be in Sub-Saharan Africa.

- Students, teachers, and other education staff fall ill or die from AIDS
- Students, particularly girls, are increasingly taken out of school
- HIV/AIDS affects teaching quality and the ability to learn



"HIV/AIDS is an immense challenge to the education sector and is already undermining progress towards the goal of Education for all by affecting the demand, supply, and quality of education."

Dakar Education Forum 2000

"AIDS is turning back the clock on development. In too many countries the gains of life expectancy won are being wiped out. In too many countries more teachers are dying each week than can be trained."

The President of the World Bank, James D. Wolfensohn, address to the UN Security Council, January 2000

- **Education Demand** - HIV/AIDS has a negative effect on students. The number of students in schools decreases. As the epidemic advances, there will be a greater number of sick children, and many children, especially girls, may be taken out of school to care for sick relatives or to take over household responsibilities (thus increasing their vulnerabilities, for example, through exploitation). Financially, fewer families will be able to support their children's education. For psychological and stigma-related reasons, children are less willing to enter and remain in school, and they may be distracted and therefore less able to learn.
- **Education Supply** - The education sector will experience a loss of human resources as teachers as well as school administrators and supporting staff die, fall sick, or are psychologically traumatised by family and community deaths due to AIDS, and therefore become unable to work. Furthermore, schools will receive less support from families and communities.
- **Education Quality** - If the education sector cannot support AIDS-affected teachers or supply adequate replacements for those who fall ill or die, the overall morale of people working in the education sector and, with that, the quality of the education system, will be reduced. Furthermore, if curricula are not providing the knowledge and skills that young people need in an AIDS-affected society, the quality of education provided to them will also decrease.
- **Education Content** - The content of current curricula must be reformed to reflect the learning needs related to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, such as health and sex education messages, coping with illness and death in the family, non-discrimination towards people living with HIV/AIDS, gender roles and issues, and life skills.
- **Education planning** - HIV/AIDS has an impact on ministries, departments, agencies, and policy makers responsible for proper planning and allocation of education resources and services. Anticipating and then dealing with the impact of the epidemic on the demand, supply, content, and quality of education at this level are time-consuming tasks, requiring much time and expertise.



"Protecting a new generation from HIV/AIDS is imperative to the future of education systems, which are themselves falling victim to the effects of HIV/AIDS."